

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A secure electronic procurement system allows a user (e.g. pharmacist) to order and confirm receipt electronically over a network (e.g. Internet) goods normally subject to a verifiable chain of custody (e.g. narcotics, controlled drugs and substances, other public distribution regulated goods or valuables). The system includes hardware and software for a user device, a secure procurement system, a supplier system and a certificate authority to authenticate communications, particularly user orders and confirmed receipts. The supplier system may be a legacy EDI based order system. Copies of electronic orders, shipping notices and receipts confirming shipment received together with digital signatures are securely stored for audit trail purposes. Business rules within the secure procurement system operate to ensure proper adherence to the chain of custody.

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